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SUBJECT: EDIRNE FLOODS - AGAIN

1.(U) On November 20, flood waters poured into the provincial capital of Edirne, Turkey -- 150 kilometers west of Istanbul. The flood, the result of a decision by the Bulgarian government to release excess water from Ivailovgrad Dam, inundated various roads and communities in the region. The Gendarmerie and divers from the Istanbul Civil Defense Department remain on the scene to address any emergencies and to distribute supplies to affected residents. Despite the damage, the Bulgarian Embassy maintains that it gave plenty of warning to the Turkish government both of the pending release of water and of the potential flood risk posed. The Turkish government has not/not requested international assistance.

2.(U) THE DAMAGE: On November 20, the Meric, Arda, and Tunca rivers crested in western Edirne province. The combined flow flooded the Orhaniye-Elicili highway, Er Square, the Balkan military cemetery, Mehmetcik Tavern, the Hall of Justice, and various fishing and agricultural communities. As a result of the floods, the Yalnizgoz, Fatih, and Kanuni bridges, as well as Turkey's largest border gates -- the Kapikule and Pazarkule -- were closed to traffic, thus stranding nearly 7,000 residents in the Karaagac and Silivri areas of Edirne. The State Meteorology Department forecasts continued precipitation in the region and has issued further flood and landslide warnings. That said, despite 300,000 YTL in aid from the Prime Minister's Office and the allocation of blankets, food, and medicine by the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality the cost is expected to climb.

3.(U) AN ANNUAL EVENT: The flooding of the Meric is an annual occurrence; in fact, The State Waterworks Authority (DSI) cleared the banks of the Meric earlier this year in an attempt to prevent this very event. The Bulgarians blame the Turks for any damage resulting from the flood, pointing to the Turkish government's failure to adequately prepare in advance. The Turks -- Edirne Governor Nusret Miroglu in particular -- cite reinforcement work performed on dikes in 2005, 2006, and 2007, as proof of preparation, and instead blame the damage on a discrepancy between the actual amount of water coming from Bulgaria and the much smaller amount of water the Bulgarians claimed they would release. Regardless of what was said, by early morning on November 20 the Meric, flowing at a rate of 1,300 cubic meters per second, far beyond the normal rate of flow of 600 cubic meters per second, breached its banks for yet another year.

WIENER